

## **Big Brothers Big Sisters launches 100 Year celebration with Largest Mentoring Study Ever in Canada**

**In partnership with CAMH, study will help create a best practices roadmap for mentoring children and youth**

**Toronto, January 15, 2013** – Canada’s largest mentoring organization is turning 100 and is celebrating with a year-long public education campaign to give Canadians fresh insights into the societal value of youth mentoring.

To mark the launch of this national effort, Big Brothers Big Sisters and the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) are releasing the first results of one of the largest mentoring studies ever conducted.

The five-year study, which tracks the experiences of almost 1,000 children and teenagers registered with Big Brother Big Sisters agencies across Canada, found that those with a mentor are significantly more confident in their academic abilities and considerably less likely to display behavioural problems.

One stand out finding is that girls in the study with a Big Sister were four times less likely to bully, fight, lie or express anger than girls without a mentor.

“This ground-breaking research confirms that mentoring changes the trajectory of young lives,” says Bruce MacDonald, president and CEO of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada (BBBSC). “The findings will have a profoundly beneficial impact on our mentoring programs.”

The study’s findings are expected to bring about significant advances in how the agencies of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada (BBBSC) deliver mentoring services. Expected outcomes are more specialized pre-match training for the child, parents and mentor; more effective match support for all three participants to better manage expectations and earlier detection of special needs among children and teenagers.

BBBSC believes that this landmark study’s legacy will be longer and more successful matches and mentoring that is more closely tailored to individual needs.

The study was conducted by a team of academics led by Dr. David DeWit, a senior research scientist CAMH in London, Ontario, and Dr. Ellen Lipman, a psychiatrist and Professor at McMaster University in Hamilton. The research was made possible by a \$1.7 million grant from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR).

“We showed that the positive findings held regardless of the children’s age, personal history, family circumstances or cultural identity,” explained DeWit. “Over time, Big Brother Big Sisters agencies will be able to counsel mentors on how best to engage with their ‘Little’ and will make it easier to identify the children most likely to benefit from having a mentor.”

**Key findings:**

- Girls with a Big Sister are two and a half times more likely than girls without a mentor to be confident in their ability to be successful at school.
- Boys with a Big Brother are three times less likely than boys without a mentor to suffer peer pressure related anxiety, such as worrying about what other children think or say about them.
- Mentored boys are two times more likely to believe that school is fun and that doing well academically is important.
- Mentored boys are also two times less likely than non-mentored boys to develop negative conducts like bullying, fighting, lying, cheating, losing their temper or expressing anger.

The breadth and detail of this study is such that these current findings are just a small sample of what will be released in the months and years to come. Each new release of findings will further illuminate the extent to which mentored children do better; why mentored children do better and Big Brother Big Sister agency practices that lead to the most successful mentoring relationships.

Over time, Big Brother Big Sisters agencies will actually be able to counsel mentors on how best to engage with their “Little” based on their, age, personal history, family circumstances and cultural identity. During the pre-match screening process, the study’s conclusions are also expected to make it easier to identify the children most likely to benefit from having a mentor.

“When the findings of this research are fully understood, we expect that virtually every aspect of how we approach, design and maintain our mentoring relationships will be impacted,” says MacDonald. “The work of the project’s outstanding team, so ably led by Dr. DeWit and Dr. Lipman, will benefit children and teenagers in every region of Canada for generations.”

“We recognize that the work of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada has played a crucial role in the lives of many young Canadians,” says Dr. Anthony Phillips, Scientific Director of the CIHR Institute of Neurosciences, Mental Health and Addiction. “CIHR is pleased to support research that provides communities with information about youth mental health and healthy development in society.” Beyond public awareness campaigns focused on youth mentoring, BBBSC and its agencies will also be hosting special events across Canada. These celebrations will pay tribute to the contributions of past and present Big Brother and Big Sister volunteers to the well-being of children and communities over the past 100 years.

Canadians can participate in BBBSC’s 100<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations through social media by giving a “big shout out” to the special people who made a difference in their lives – be they parents, extended family members, coaches, teachers, employers or a volunteer Big Brother or Big Sister. People can tell their mentoring story to the Big Brothers Big Sisters community by visiting [www.thebigshout.ca](http://www.thebigshout.ca).

### **About Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada**

For one hundred years, Big Brothers Big Sisters has been making a positive difference in the lives of Canada’s youth by developing and implementing a wide range of mentoring programs. BBBSC volunteer mentors teach by example the importance of giving back, of staying in school, and of respecting family, peers and community.

BBBSC provides quality mentoring services for more than 33,000 children and teenagers. The community-based youth mentoring organization currently has over 25,000 volunteer mentors working at 123 agencies that serve children in over 1,000 communities across the country. Learn more. Visit [www.bigbrothersbigsisters.ca](http://www.bigbrothersbigsisters.ca).

**About the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health**

The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) is Canada's largest mental health and addiction teaching hospital, as well as one of the world's leading research centres in its field. CAMH combines clinical care, research, education, policy development and health promotion to help transform the lives of people affected by mental health and addiction issues.

CAMH is fully affiliated with the University of Toronto, and is a Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization Collaborating Centre. For more information, please visit [www.camh.ca](http://www.camh.ca)

**About the Canadian Institutes of Health Research**

The Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) is the Government of Canada's health research investment agency. CIHR's mission is to create new scientific knowledge and to enable its translation into improved health, more effective health services and products, and a strengthened Canadian health care system. Composed of 13 Institutes, CIHR provides leadership and support to more than 14,100 health researchers and trainees across Canada.